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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002739

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: MINISTER OF STATE SEEKS TO PULL PROVINCES INTO  
STATE ORBIT

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Robert S. Ford, Reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) "We must teach the provinces the meaning of centralization," the new Minister of State for Governorate Affairs told PolMinCouns and DepPolCouns (notetaker) during their August 24 courtesy call. Mrs. Khulud Sami 'Azarah Al Ma'jun, who was confirmed in late July to fill a long vacant cabinet spot, commented that there had been no effective ministerial control of the provinces since "the Collapse of 2003". Noting that her portfolio had been very active during the Saddam years, she suggested that Baghdad's lighter touch in recent years had misled the provinces into believing they were independent of the central state. Greater coordination between the provincial and central governments was imperative and her office would strive to fulfill a missing managerial role. Poloffs told the Minister of State that Coalition PRTs aim to build local administrative capacity according to a menu of projects agreed upon with local governments. There obviously needs to be coordination between the central government and the provinces, they noted, but it is also important to build local capacity -- a point the Minister of State readily accepted.

#### Governorates Show Competency Deficit

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¶2. (C) Khulud suggested there were significant unresolved questions, chiefly, where did governors themselves fit into the state apparatus. Was a governor subordinate to his or her Provincial Council (PC) or to a central ministry? Khulud suggested her shop should take on greater oversight of governors and provide a link for the governorates with the Office of the Prime Minister as well as key service ministries like the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works. Adding to the urgency of reform was the patent incompetence of many governors and governorates, which she said was evident in many their failures at project management. Khulud declared it vital to stand up the capacity of the governorates, if only to free the Office of the Prime Minister from having to step in on project management. There was need of a systematic, legally-based review of the governorates, she said, mentioning a draft law currently being reviewed by the Ministry of Justice which would address the qualifications of Provincial Council members and Governors.

#### Governorate Affairs: A Little Shop Around the Corner

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¶3. (C) Khulud stated that resources at the Governorates Affairs office were insufficient, especially given its responsibilities for the whole of Iraq. She had added two secretaries to a staff of 16, which included two legal advisers alongside largely administrative support. Khulud's efforts to set up a team for tribal outreach had stalled after her proposed candidate failed to win central approval. She would continue to flag for the Prime Minister the need for further resources. Any USG support would be welcome,

especially funding, she commented, prompting PolMinCounselor to caution that we could not provide financing. He suggested instead the possibility of technical assistance with regard to legislative drafting, and the Minister said this, too, would be of interest.

Teaching Khulud about the PRTs  
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¶4. (C) Khulud claimed ignorance of the PRT program and PolMinCouns provided a short explanation of the scope of their assistance throughout the provinces. PolMinCouns volunteered he would work with OPA Director to facilitate encounters with Team Leaders and explore opportunities for encounters with the PRTs, which Khulud suggested she might pursue in conjunction with local officials when visiting the provinces. (Note: OPA Director will request a meeting with the Minister to provide a briefing on PRT mission and will offer assistance in arranging briefings from PRTs when the Minister is traveling to a province. Hopefully, these will be joint briefings with the provincial governments. End Note.)

Comment: Message -- Bring the Governorates to Heel  
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¶5. (C) Comment: Khulud lost no time in defining her mandate in terms of reestablishing a degree of control over the governorates so as to correct their growing if mistaken sense of independence from the central government. Her approach was consistent with efforts of PM Maliki to impose anew the authority of Baghdad on the periphery, notably through

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military operations in Basra, Maysan, Diyala and Mosul, which brought pressure to bear on both governors and the PC to toe the line. Her questioning of the true autonomy of governors, let alone their competency, recalled past attempts to relieve governors in Basra and Maysan and it echoed the battle royale waged during passage of the Provincial Powers Law about whether the Prime Minister, the Council of Representatives, and the PCs should have the authority to dismiss governors and what would constitute due process. In sum, her views mirror those of many of our contacts in Baghdad who have never seen a truly federal state in Iraq or elsewhere in the region. Instead, she spoke of a vision of state affairs far closer to what she has known since she was a young law student.

Biodata for Minister of State for Governorate Affairs  
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¶6. (U) Born in 1950, Mrs. Khulud Sami 'Azarah Al Ma'jun Khulud holds a Bachelors of Law from Baghdad University (1972), as well as Diplomas in Legal Studies and Criminology and a Doctorate in Criminal Law from Cairo University. An Iraqi citizen, she also holds Saudi citizenship through her father, who was granted political asylum in Saudi Arabia in 1971. Khulud said she had lived over 24 years abroad, working for 14 years in Saudi Arabia at a College of Administrative Science. She worked at the Iraqi Ministry of Interior from 2007 until her appointment to Minister of State in 2008. Born in 1950, she is married and has two daughters and a son. Khulud, who professes to belong to no party, has roots in the United Iraqi Alliance.

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